

Activities: Safety and Dress

Sinkers and Floaters

Modified with permission from *Fish Iowa! A Teaching Module*, Iowa DNR

Overview:

Students practice putting on PFDs in a hypothetical capsize situation.

Associated Objectives:

- ☐ Students will become familiar with basic safety and dress guidelines for canoeing or kayaking.
- ☐ Students will become familiar with terminology and equipment associated with canoeing and kayaking.

Time:

15 – 30 minutes

Materials:

PFDs of different sizes, and in various conditions (some should be illegal with straps broken, material ripped, etc.), there should be two or four PFDs in good shape and the proper size

Directions:

Refer to “Required Equipment” in **Regulations and Ethics** section of the *Background Information* for more information about legal requirements for PFDs. Have two or four students volunteer to participate while the rest watch. Volunteers pretend to “paddle” two canoes. Have a pile of PFDs in each “canoe.” At your signal, the “canoe” capsizes and the “paddlers” see how quickly they can correctly put on legal PFDs. Time how long it takes. Determine who has on legal PFDs and who would be struggling if they were in the water. Discuss the problems with the illegal PFDs and remove all illegal PFDs from the “canoes.”

Repeat the activity a second time. This time the PFDs all are legal and should be untangled and properly adjusted. Since canoes capsize very quickly, “paddlers” should try to get them on in under five seconds. Determine if any “paddlers” would have their PFDs on before entering the water. Explain to students that canoes may capsize without warning. When the craft capsizes all its contents enter the water and may float away if they are not secured to the canoe. Paddlers may not be able to reach their PFD.

Have the canoe capsize a third time. Paddlers should have their PFDs on and properly adjusted. Students should decide which method is safest: having legal and illegal PFDs aboard, having legal PFDs on board, or wearing legal PFDs at all times.

Evaluation:

Students should be able to recognize whether a PFD is legal or illegal. Students should be able to demonstrate the proper way to wear a PFD. They also should recognize the best time to put on a PFD is before entering the craft.

Extensions:

Have students model different types of PFDs. Models should demonstrate how to read the label, select a proper size, and watch for wear or tear. (Modified with permission from *Fish Iowa! A Teaching Module*, Iowa DNR)

Students play a game similar to musical chairs. They walk around a pre-defined circle containing a pile of PFDs. At the start of the activity the number of PFDs are equal to the number of participants. While the music plays, students walk around the pile. When the music stops, the students scramble to get a life jacket and put it on. Check to make sure everyone is wearing her PFD correctly. Tell them that following the next round they will be “out” if they are not wearing their PFD correctly. Take one PFD from the pile after the first round so one participant is left without a PFD. Start the music and repeat the process.

Have one student wearing a PFD demonstrate the H.E.L.P position in water. (See “Other Safety Tips - Hypothermia” in the **Safety** section of the *Background Information* for a description of this position.) Have another student get into the H.E.L.P. position without a PFD. Time students to see how long they can stay afloat in the water. Pair students and let them choose whether or not to wear a PFD. Most should agree that in order to survive, one must wear a PFD.